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ABSTRACT

This feature issue presents articles on the social inclusion of people with developmental disabilities into the community and also some related news items. This issue provides profiles of organizations, workplaces, and schools that are successfully integrating people with developmental disabilities into community activities. The articles are: "'I Look Out for Them, They Look Out for Me'- Finding Home in a Gang" (Lisa Nitcy Hope), showing a negative outcome when community integration fails; "What Is Social Inclusion All About?" (Brian Abery) addressing the need to move beyond mere physical inclusion to true social inclusion; "Overcoming Barriers to Social Inclusion" (Kris Schoeller) identifies barriers to inclusion and suggests strategies; "Person-Centered Social Inclusion Planning" (Dawna Phillips and Ann Eggebeen) describes a specific strategy to foster social relationships and activities for people with autism and other developmental disabilities; "So, What Is the Problem with Belonging?" (Lesa Nitcy Hope and Mary Yoder); "Unlimited Connections: Inclusion in the World of Dating and Romance" (Linda Dvelis); "Deliverance Evangelistic Church: Transforming Lives and Communities" (Harold Dean Trulear); "Cultural Inclusion: Connecting with the American Indian Community" (Matt Ziegler); "A Community of Volunteers" (Cheska Komissar and Debra Hart) discusses integrating people with disabilities into community volunteer programs; "College Life: The New Frontier" (Mary Beth Doyle) discusses how Trinity College (Vermont) includes students with developmental disabilities; "Social Inclusion in a High School: The Peer Connections Program" (Joy Keachie); "One Employer's Commitment to Inclusion" (Ann M. Bauer); "Inclusion in a Family Business" (John Labalestra); and "Social Inclusion through Self-Advocacy" (John G. Smith and

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Irving Martin). Vignettes of individuals with disabilities are provided to illustrate most of the programs described. (DB)

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Impact

Feature Issue on the Social Inclusion of Adults with Developmental Disabilities

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For John Peters, a feeling of belonging to a larger community comes through performing traditional American Indian dances at pow wows. See story on page 13.

"I Look Out for Them, They Look Out for Me" – Finding Home in a Gang

by Lesa Nitcy Hope

James kicks back in his chair, crosses his arms and scans the room. He then stares right at me. "Let me tell you how it is. They're my posse. I look out for them, they look out for me. That's how it is." What could I say? He knew he belonged. He had peers who cared about him and who would take action to prove that. They noticed when he wasn't around. They would defend him through thick and thin, against anyone or anything that would threaten or cause harm.

Trouble is, his peers are a gang. James wears bandannas of a particular color when he goes out. He has been initiated, completing a ritual that others have completed. I do not know how he was initiated. Since becoming involved, he has participated in car thefts and drug sales. He has been in fights, protecting the honor and territory of his friends. When asked about what he's done, he says, "The less you know, the better."

His grandmother told me, "He was such a sweet boy. His mother didn't take care of him so the state took him away. Before he went away he was a loving, caring person, but then they locked him in institutions and treated him badly. Tied him up. Locked him in rooms alone. He hadn't done anything wrong except have a mother who didn't do what she was supposed to. It changed him. He has been mad ever since. It made him hard."

[James, continued on page 26]

From the Editors

There is all too often a great distance socially between persons with and without disabilities. This is especially true when more severe disabilities, such as developmental disabilities, are present. To overcome social barriers and create a sense of inclusion for all in our communities, a "common ground" must be established between persons with and without disabilities. This will only occur if members of both groups have opportunities to get to know each other in a variety of environments and activities.

In this IMPACT are profiles of a number of organizations, workplaces, and schools that are enabling people to find that common ground as they share experiences ranging from worship services to volunteer and paid work to dating. In these settings, people can connect as individuals who have similar interests, backgrounds, or goals rather than as labels or stereotypes. Such opportunities allow the unique capacities and gifts of each person to be truly appreciated.

It is our hope that through the information and personal stories in these pages service providers will find ideas for expanding social inclusion opportunities and minimizing barriers to full membership in the community for adults with developmental disabilities.

What's Inside

Overview of Issues
Program & Individual Profiles
Resources

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What is Social Inclusion All About?

by Brian Abery

Sarah is a 19-year-old young woman who is in her fourth year of high school. She receives much of her academic instruction within general education settings alongside her peers without disabilities, and is well-known within her school. During lunch break, however, when most students "hang out" with their friends, Sarah is not even at school but in the community taking part in a job training program. There, it is typical to see her eating lunch sitting at a table by herself. When classes end, the majority of her classmates remain at school for extracurricular activities including athletics, clubs, and student government. Once again, however, Sarah does not have the opportunity to take part in these types of activities but goes directly home from her employment training experience. When Sarah leaves the classroom, her contact with her peers is cut off. No one calls to invite her to join evening or weekend activities. Rarely, if ever, does she have the opportunity to interact in the community with those with whom she attends school or work. Classmates are not seen during school vacations or over the summer. Despite the fact that Sarah receives her educational services within a school district that is committed to inclusion, she is socially isolated.

When Sarah leaves the classroom, her contact with peers is cut off. Despite the fact that she receives educational services within a school district committed to inclusion, she is socially isolated.

Mark has been working at a manufacturing company for 10 years. An extroverted 31-year-old man, he gets along well with his coworkers and supervisor and has been named employee of the month on several occasions. During breaks and lunch, he engages in small talk with his peers, teasing them about their choice of clothing and the sports teams they support, and asking questions about their families. His coworkers, who all know Mark well, respond in kind. When weekends approach the conversation at lunch typically revolves around the activities that people are planning for their free time. Picnics with family or friends, softball games, and traveling to the city to see one of the local sports teams are the typical fare. Observing Mark during this type of conversation is revealing. He typically lowers his head and becomes extremely quiet. As coworkers make plans with each other, Mark is left out of the conversation. The young man whom everyone likes and appreciates as a colleague spends most of his evenings and weekends sitting alone in his apartment watching television, just hoping that someone will call.

Both Sarah and Mark live within what most would view as caring communities. Yet, neither of them experience the levels of social inclusion they desire.

What is Social Inclusion?

What do we mean by *social inclusion*? The term, while appearing frequently over the last few years, has yet to be well defined. Although attempts have been made to define social inclusion in ways that can be measured, most efforts have fallen short primarily because of the highly personal, individualized nature of it. No guidelines exist for determining the degree, type, and context of social interaction necessary for an individual to feel included in or a part of a community. A set of social relationships that is sufficient to allow one individual to feel "included" may be totally insufficient for another. Conversations with Mark, for example, indicate that he is looking for a large network of persons with whom to engage in a wide variety of activities on a regular basis both at home and in the community. Sarah, on the other hand, has expressed a preference for developing and maintaining a small set of close, intimate friends with whom she can discuss personal issues relevant to her life. The specific activities through which this might occur are seen by Sarah as irrelevant, the basic purpose of getting together being viewed as purely social in nature. In contrast, Mark views the community activities in which he might engage with others as a crucial part of what he defines as social inclusion.

In addition, the cultural/ethnic group membership of individuals is likely to influence their experience of a sense of inclusion. In some cultures, there is an decided emphasis on the kinship group to which persons belong. In these cultures, the extent to which one has available a close, interconnected network of members of the immediate and extended family may be a critical factor in defining a person's sense of inclusion. In other cultures, the family plays a much less immediate role in the experience of social inclusion. The extent to which persons who are members of such ethnic/cultural groups experience a sense of belonging may be more closely tied to the relationships they establish and maintain with those persons with whom they do not have kinship ties.

What then is meant by the term social inclusion? For most of us, it means experiencing a sense of belonging; feeling that persons other than family and professionals care for, value, and desire to spend time with us; knowing that support will be available if it is needed; and having regular access to the community and those within it with whom we

desire to associate. It is the feeling of being a contributing part of a network of persons whom we know, who know us, and who know each other. A sense of so-

As coworkers make plans with each other, Mark is left out of the conversation. The young man whom everyone likes and appreciates as a colleague spends most evenings and weekends alone.

cial inclusion is most likely to be achieved when we are able to develop and maintain a set of reciprocal social relationships based upon trust and mutual caring that transcend specific settings or contexts. These associations have an impact on how we view ourselves and our world, and meet a myriad of personal needs. They are crucial for the successful community adjustment of persons with as well as without disabilities.

Most persons agree that social relationships form the basis of feelings of inclusion. In the absence of such interaction, it is the rare person who would maintain that they are included. This point is brought home clearly by findings that many individuals with developmental disabilities who spend significant amounts of time within inclusive environments report that they do not experience a sense of inclusion; this is due to a lack of interaction with persons other than paid staff who populate these settings. The concept of *social relationship*, however, is almost as difficult to define as that of inclusion. Social relationships are by their very nature fluid. They are in a constant flux due to changes in the individuals involved (e.g., personal growth, change in interests etc.) as well as transformations in the context within which interaction takes place (e.g., work versus a recreation/leisure environment). There are various types of social relationships that people develop including acquaintances, peer or collegial relationships, and friendships. These relationships may be horizontal in that the persons involved may have approximately equal power such as in relationships with peers. Or they may be hierarchical in that one person has considerably more power or control than the other, such as employer-employee and parent-child relationships. For most individuals, it is a combination of these various types of social relationships that leads to the experience of inclusion.

For each person the extent to which social relationships contribute to feelings of inclusion is likely to vary based upon frequency of contact, levels of intimacy, and the functions specific relationships serve. Social relationships, as well as the experience of inclusion, are also likely to change dramatically over time. The fact that persons feel included at one point does not necessarily mean they experience a sense of inclusion at other times or in other contexts. Social inclusion must therefore be understood as an uniquely individual experience.

Social Inclusion as a Goal of Educational and Human Services

Why should enhancement of the social inclusion of persons with developmental disabilities be a primary goal of the provision of educational and human services? This is a question many have recently asked as increased regulation, competing priorities, and limited resources make it impossible for service organizations to provide the necessary supports to enhance all aspects of the lives of the persons with disabilities whom they serve. At the most basic level, the answer to this question is that persons with developmental disabilities have for many years told us that social inclusion is important to them. Almost without exception, research studies have found that social relationships and social inclusion are the first or second most important factor identified by members of this group themselves as contributing to the quality of life they experience.

Just as important is the fact that as persons with developmental disabilities move into independent community living situations they will have more of a need for a network of natural supports composed of friends, neighbors, coworkers. Such support networks will be difficult if not impossible to develop and maintain if individuals experience only limited social inclusion. The absence of an informal support network is likely to have an adverse effect on the life of any individual, with or without a disability. Such supportive relationships, however, are likely to be critical to the community inclusion of persons with developmental disabilities. High intensity, reciprocal bonds with others are the most reliable sources of the social and emotional support that has been found to predict the extent to which individuals with developmental disabilities are able to not only survive, but to thrive within the community. These naturally supportive relationships and the sense of inclusion they engender not only enhance the quality of life persons with disabilities experience but reduce the need for the involvement of paid professionals in the lives of members of this population, with a resulting decrease in the costs of support services.

If the majority of individuals with developmental disabilities were able to effectively develop natural support networks that facilitated their inclusion in the community and ensured their experiencing a high quality of life, there would be little need to make social inclusion a primary goal of education and human service programs. The information currently available, however, suggests that this is not the case. The social networks of persons with developmental disabilities living within community residences are typically composed of parents, siblings, fellow residents, and professionals. For the most part,

[*Abery, continued on page 26*]

Overcoming Barriers to Social Inclusion

by Kris Schoeller

Children and adults with developmental disabilities are still sitting home alone with too little to do and too few friends to call. Caring, sharing, touching, laughing, and crying together are what makes life creative and energized. For most people, interacting with others gives depth and quality to school, work, and recreation. For persons with developmental disabilities, the barriers to this type of social experience are many. In this article, attitudinal, structural, and educational barriers to social inclusion will be identified and alternatives suggested for overcoming them.

Attitudinal Barriers

Attitudinal barriers to social inclusion include fear, embarrassment, distancing, and underestimating. When persons without disabilities have a lack of experience with persons who have developmental disabilities, they may be afraid of doing the wrong thing or of not being able to interact, or may feel embarrassed by trying to communicate with someone who may think or speak differently than they do. This can lead to avoidance of persons with disabilities. If an individual without a disability accepts stereotypes about persons with developmental disabilities as being unable to interact on an adult level and incapable of contributing to a relationship, then this can lead to relationships based on pity or caretaking. If persons without disabilities perceive those with disabilities as very different from themselves and miss the commonalities, they may underestimate the value of relationships between those with and without disabilities. When opportunities for persons with developmental disabilities to be valued employees, loyal friends, effective leaders, caring volunteers, and life partners are viewed as unimportant or inappropriate, there is a distancing from the shared human experiences that persons with and without disabilities have. As long as these attitudes continue, social inclusion will be difficult to achieve.

Over the past decade, numerous programs have been developed that are referred to as "inclusive." Often inclusion has meant a change in physical space so that persons with disabilities share a place or activity with persons without disabilities. However, the social interaction is still not present, in part, because attitudinal barriers have not been adequately addressed.

Over the years, persons with developmental disabilities have been successfully included in a variety of community volunteer, civic, recreational, and political organizations. This type of community involvement is key to attitude change. When people are given the chance to interact and experience a relationship that challenges their stereotypes or misperceptions about someone, the possibility of meaningful connections opens up. As other members of the community see individuals with developmental disabilities contributing to the community, and as they participate together side-by-side and get to know one another, not only does this change in attitude occur for persons without disabilities, but persons with disabilities also experience increased self-esteem and greater confidence in reaching out and establishing social relationships.

Structural/Organization Barriers

Structural and organizational barriers refer to the ways in which organizations think about and provide support services. Many service systems have developed policies, regulations, and funding that use resources only for job skills, independent living skills, or structured recreation activities. Many systems continue to use a deficit-based, medical model to assess needs and develop plans. This approach ignores or minimizes the human needs and abilities of a person with a developmental disability. Its focus on remediation of the disability eliminates or minimizes assessing and planning for social inclusion and relationship development. Resources – which are always a scarce commodity – are focused on making the person with a disability more "normal" and not on finding matches between existing opportunities for social connections and where the person is at right now.

I wish someone would have helped us make more friends and find a way to help us keep in contact with those friends.

How do we change the manner in which organizations provide services to persons with developmental disabilities? If persons with disabilities, service providers, families, and community members who do not have disabilities are given opportunities to sit with each other and talk about their lives – to share the common struggles, frustrations, rewards, joys, needs, ambitions, and dreams that are part of being human – the focus of services can change. If people come together around commonalities, if they're all allowed to tell their personal stories, then they will find common ground between their own humanness and that of others. Getting people together in a way that allows them to share stories rather than interact based on expertise and "deficits" creates an entirely different relationship. In the book *Crossing the River* by David Schwartz, service providers decided to toss their briefcases and suits and mingle with the community. Building relationships among community members with and without developmental dis-

abilities became their focus. This is what we must do, as well.

Educational/Informational Barriers

Educational and informational barriers also have a negative impact on the social inclusion of persons with developmental disabilities. Families, individuals with disabilities, and service providers are often unaware of social opportunities in the community. Many do not understand rights for access or accommodation. Neighbors, employers, extended family, and others may not understand how a developmental disability affects a person's life and how important it is to create opportunities for social inclusion. We continue to educate teachers and service providers in the medical model and neglect educating them about working as equal partners and relationship builders with persons with disabilities.

In addition, parents and persons with disabilities are often unsure of how to advocate for the supports that are needed. Many times persons with disabilities or their families worry about asking for too much. They worry about the rejection or insensitivity that they may experience within the community. There is still a deep concern about vulnerability and abuse. This often results in anxiety and fear. Teachers and other support staff not educated in relationship building share some of the fear of vulnerability that individuals with disabilities and their families experience.

Having the information and skills necessary to advocate for one's self or another includes not merely learning the definition of a disability, but how the disability affects relationships, learning, and interacting with the community. Families, schools, service providers, and persons with disabilities need this type of education. If disability continues to be viewed as a shameful secret rather than a characteristic that can be openly spoken about, individuals will not want to learn about their own disabilities and advocate for themselves. There will continue to be denial and a struggle to identify only as a person without a disability. Social interactions and healthy relationships are built when people feel good about themselves, control their lives, and value the unique traits of each individual.

Strategies for Enhancing Inclusion

A young adult with a developmental disability recently spoke on a panel at a regional conference. One of the questions asked of him by the panel moderator was, "What would have made your transition to adulthood better, what could the school have helped more with?" The response of this young man echoes that of many youth and adults with disabilities: "I wish someone would have helped us make more friends and find a way to help us keep in contact with those friends." As an adult, this young man has voiced fear and depression about ever being able to fit into the world in which he lives. There have been times when he has chosen to continue relationships with others that are abusive rather than be faced with having no social connections at all.

The verbal and behavioral responses of this young man are familiar to youth and adults who have experienced social rejection. The inclusion of persons with disabilities is crucial for their healthy development and to ensure that they maintain a high quality of life. In this article, several barriers to the social inclusion of persons with developmental disabilities have been touched upon. The list and suggestions provided here are by no means exhaustive, but they are a starting point in looking at the challenges faced by persons with disabilities in striving for a greater sense of belonging in the community. When provided with the appropriate supports, enhanced inclusion can become a reality rather than a goal, enriching the lives of all members of the community.

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Reference
Schwartz, D.B. (1992). *Crossing the river*. Cambridge, MA: Brookline Books.

Advocacy Strategies

When individuals with disabilities encounter barriers to social inclusion within organizations, businesses, or services, it may be an occasion for advocacy by the individual and/or others. Below are some suggested steps for effective advocacy:

Know the Goals. Understand the goals of the person for whom you are advocating in relation to the barrier.

Find the Right Level and Right Person. Identify the level of the organization or business at which the problem is occurring and person likely to have the authority to correct the situation at that level. Begin advocacy there.

Present the Problem. Approach the person who has authority and present the problem. Ask whether the person is aware of the problem. If unaware, inform them about the history and details of the situation.

Present Your Goals. Clearly and briefly express your advocacy goals.

Respond to Resistance. If the person seems unsupportive, ask the person to describe the mission and goals of the organization or business. Point out any ways in which their response to the problem conflicts with the mission and goals. Find out if the person is aware of the rights of the individual for whom you are advocating; if they are unaware, inform them about rights that relate to this situation. Ask again if they have the authority to work with you to correct the situation. If not, find out who does and begin again.

Brainstorm and Implement Solutions. With the person who has authority, brainstorm possible solutions. After implementation of a solution, monitor the situation to see if it improves.

Thank Supporters. After the situation has been resolved, thank those who assisted in its resolution.

Adapted from *Yes I Can: A Social Inclusion Curriculum for Students With and Without Disabilities*. See page 25 of IMPACT.

Person-Centered Social Inclusion Planning

by Dawna Phillips and Ann Eggebeen

The Person-Centered Social Inclusion Planning (PCSIP) process, developed by the Social Inclusion Project staff at the Institute on Community Integration, is a strategy for intentionally enhancing the social inclusion of adults and young adults with autism and other developmental disabilities. The major difference between this approach and the other person-centered planning processes (e.g., the McGill Action Planning System, Personal Futures Planning, Life-Style Planning) is its focus on the social relationships and activities of individuals with disabilities.

In the PCSIP process, the focus is on the individual with the disability: who the person is and what the person wants now and in the future. The focus is also on the individual's capacities, not weaknesses. Through the process, participants look at how the individual can be supported and/or the environment be changed to accomplish a goal, rather than at how the individual can be changed. The process is designed to make the individual with the disability and his or her family the most important judges of quality of life.

Megan's story illustrates how PCSIP works. She is a 20-year-old woman with a form of autism, in her second year of a post-secondary transition program in Minneapolis. She lives at home with her parents and two younger siblings. Her involvement with the PCSIP process began in 1996, with Erin Simunds and Dawna Phillips as facilitators.

The first phase of the PCSIP process involves the recruitment of individuals who agree to come together and work with the focus person (individual with a disability) to brainstorm ideas for enhancing his or her social life. The focus person should have the primary say in determining who should be involved. Megan's social network is dense. Therefore, she did not have any difficulty in finding people to invite to participate in her PCSIP process. She invited mostly family members, but also family friends and peers.

The second phase of the process is the PCSIP meetings where a description of the focus person is developed that clearly defines his or her capacities, interests, and resources for enhanced social relationships and opportunities. These meetings culminate with the creation of a vision for the focus person and development of an action plan to make the vision a reality. Facilitators are a critical aspect of the PCSIP process, and are responsible for creating a safe, casual, and fun environment in which the group can share ideas. Usually two facilitators work the best. The first leads the group discussion, making sure that the focus person has his or her say and the contributions of all the participants are heard and valued. A second facilitator records the group's comments on a flipchart using colors, symbols, and words, producing a series of maps that illustrate the patterns of a person's life and provide a written record of the meetings.

Megan's first PCSIP meeting took place in April, 1996, at her neighborhood church. There was an immediate sense of camaraderie among everyone. Although intended to give ultimate control of the process to the focus person and then the other participants, this role is not always easily adopted by participants who may not have the experience or comfort level to facilitate and/or contribute to a group. This was not the case with Megan and her group. The amount of information that they had and were willing to share was immense. Erin, the recorder, had a difficult time keeping up with capturing everything that was being shared. After awhile, Megan took over Dawna's role as group facilitator, asking the discussion questions herself.

This level of comfort, openness, and friendliness continued with the next PCSIP meeting at the office of a neighborhood organization. All but two of the people at the first meeting returned and Megan's sister joined the group for the first time. The second PCSIP meeting is usually a more challenging and contemplative one, as proved true for Megan and her group. At this meeting, the group discussed resources, barriers, fears, visions, and action plans. Again, Megan's maps were easily filled and she felt confident enough to direct the group discussion at several points. With assistance from family and friends, she identified 13 visions she was interested in pursuing. She was asked to prioritize these and to pick one to several for which she wanted to develop action plans. Her action plan priorities were a) to explore a library aide or data entry career, b) to live in an apartment, c) to attend a community education class with a friend, and d) to maintain friendships. For each priority, an overall plan was developed that: a) identified the person(s) responsible for executing each action, b) the time frame for completion of each action, c) supports available for implementation, and d) supports needed before the action could occur.

In the midst of developing action plans for these visions, Megan became tearful, a strong indication that she needed a break. She had become overwhelmed with the numerous steps involved in the plans, and perhaps felt like she was losing some control of the process. Along with Megan's mom and sister, Dawna reassured Megan that she had options and that it was okay to feel overwhelmed when talking about her future. Eventually, Megan decided to continue with the final action plan and gave instructions to keep the steps simple. The group quickly finished the final action plan to maintain friendships. One of the steps of this plan immediately led to Megan and her aunts planning a lunch date at her school for the following week. It was useful to end the meeting with a tangible outcome so near. Everyone then gathered outside to take

group pictures that were included in the family album.

Most of the work of the PCSIP process occurs after the PCSIP meetings with the challenge of implementing the action plans, keeping group members motivated and informed, and accommodating any changes with the focus person, group members, visions, and action plans. Ideally, this phase is ongoing with follow-up meetings held to celebrate progress and/or to brainstorm ways to overcome obstacles. As the action plan is realized, new goals may be set with new individuals contributing to the realization of these goals. Further time commitments by group members will depend upon the action plans developed.

Person-Centered Social Inclusion Planning is one effective strategy for enhancing the social inclusion of persons with developmental disabilities.

Following Megan's second PCSIP meeting, Dawna stayed in contact with her at least twice a month to discuss, encourage, and reinforce Megan's progress towards achieving her social inclusion visions, and to maintain that relationship as a link to community resources. Eventually, Megan began to return or initiate phone calls to Dawna, which was viewed as a favorable sign since she admittedly did not like to use the phone. Dawna also tried to further develop a working relationship with Megan's parents by providing them with resources and keeping them informed of her conversations and plans with Megan.

In October, 1996, Megan and Dawna decided that it was time to plan a celebration of all of the exciting social opportunities she'd had in the past few months and for her upcoming November birthday. They did some initial planning while the rest of the details were handled by Megan, her mom, and sister. Many of Megan's friends from school came to the party. Megan had never shared a birthday celebration in her home with this group of friends. Dawna made it a point to acknowledge the good things that had happened for Megan since her last PCSIP get-together. Megan made sure that Dawna didn't leave out any details:

- Working at the United Way during the summer.
- Receiving written information and Internet addresses related to community education classes, consumer-controlled housing, and autism.
- Writing more letters to family members on a used computer and printer set up in her room by her father.
- Making more phone calls to friends and staff.
- Taking and enjoying "college classes," including keyboarding, calculator use, and an employment social skills class.
- Using her new day planner, which her aunt bought for her to plan social dates.
- Pursuing, with her mother's help, a volunteer job at a local library, volunteering there two nights a week.
- Assisting with her church's youth gospel group.
- And, finally, planning and hosting her celebration party.

At the end of this party, Megan and her friends exchanged phone numbers and addresses with the intention to get together again in the near future. This action is related to some of Megan's PCSIP visions – thinking about a future apartment mate, taking a community education class with a friend, meeting friends after school, and maintaining communication with friends.

Not all of Megan's visions have yet been realized, and some steps did not occur as planned. However, she has moved forward in enhancing social relationships and opportunities and has become more empowered to take action on her behalf as a result of this process.

According to feedback from the overwhelming number of participants in the Social Inclusion Project, the PCSIP process is a positive experience. What the focus persons like most about it is the opportunity to have friends, family, and others who care about them come together and talk about them in a positive manner. Other PCSIP participants report that taking part in the process helps shape a different personal perception of the focus person. Many participants have been impressed with how much more "intelligent," "thoughtful," and "socially capable" the focus person is than what they had previously experienced. The process is a motivating factor for participants to explore new social opportunities in a way that the focus person desires and the group can support. After learning about the social needs and goals of the focus person, many participants have an increased awareness of opportunities that arise to include the person in social activities within the family or community.

Person-Centered Social Inclusion Planning is not the only approach to planning and enhancing the social dimensions of life for individuals with developmental disabilities. It is, however one effective approach in situations where participants have the time, motivation, and commitment to be involved. Megan's story clearly shows that the process can energize and empower an individual and their significant others by providing a framework and direction for turning an individual's social vision and desires into a reality.

Dawna Phillips is Research Assistant and Ann Eggebeen is Project Coordinator with the Social Inclusion Project, Institute on Community Integration, University of Minnesota, Minneapolis. For further information on PCSIP and the PCSIP manual to be published early 1998, contact Brian Abery at 612/625-5592.

So, What is the Problem with Belonging?

by Lesa Nitcy Hope and Mary Yoder

Belonging is important. We know that and we value it. One of the major goals of the Atlanta Alliance on Developmental Disabilities (AADD) is to support people in participating in their communities. So what is the problem?

The nicknames of the neighborhoods tell part of the story – areas called Little Vietnam and the Combat Zone. In these inner city neighborhoods and housing projects, there is poverty, violence, despair. Living conditions are terrible, almost unimaginable. As in any community, there are contradictions – families whose lives are desperate, even gaunt, live in the same block as strong, capable leaders such as older women who become grandmothers and caregivers for all the children in the community. And as defines community, there is a named sense of place and belonging, a place you know as "home." You are part of its history. Although these places are portrayed as fractured, there is a significant territoriality and cohesion that is real – *my* home, *my* neighborhood, *my* turf. Role models from the neighborhood play an important part in the development of its young people.

One gang member I know made sure that his little brother Sam, who had significant physical disabilities, had diapers. When he was in prison, another member of the gang took on making sure there were diapers until Sam's brother was released.

Children with and without disabilities grow up here, wanting to be part of the "in" crowd, part of the group that has status, influence, respect. They all want to belong, to have relationships with peers, to feel a sense of welcome and acceptance. These are the core values of real life, what we describe as *inclusion* in the field of developmental disabilities. But, what happens when the group offering acceptance is a gang?

It is predictable. If a 7-year-old child goes to school and is told that he won't amount to anything, that he is incapable of learning, he looks elsewhere for affirmation. He is labeled lazy, unmotivated, oppositional. He becomes passive out of discouragement, or combative and "a behavior problem." In his neighborhood, an 18-year-old guy approaches and asks him to watch the corner and let him know when the cops drive in or an unknown car shows up. The 7-year-old feels he is being given an important job, that somebody believes he can do something. The older guy gives him some candy or a little money for his time. Given how different this experience is from school, it is no wonder what he chooses.

As children grow older, they become more immersed in the gang culture. They carry weapons and packages of drugs and sell marijuana. They shoplift. They are initiated into gangs, usually through illegal activity that strengthens their allegiance. They wear bandannas with particular colors. They wear identifying clothing. Everyone knows their affiliation. Finally they belong.

While selling drugs and guarding turf are part of what they spend their days doing, the most important thing they do is spend time together. They become a close-knit family. It is this connection that is compelling. They take care of one another. One gang member I know made sure that his little brother Sam, who had significant physical disabilities, had diapers. When he was in prison, another member of the gang took on making sure there were diapers until Sam's brother was released.

The AADD, an organization that works with people with developmental disabilities who live below the poverty level, has worked with increasing numbers of young people with disabilities who have been recruited into gangs. In providing alternatives to gangs for these youth and young adults, we have found it critical to work with other organizations who are reaching out to them: civil rights organizations, neighborhood associations, churches, recreation programs. We have contacted the Malcolm X Center for Self Determination, the YMCA, the police department gang task force, and city hall. When children are younger, we have tried connecting them to after-school programs, summer camps, Sierra Club Inner City Outings.

Intervention is difficult and cannot be taken lightly. It is a challenge to find the person a place or situation where they will get the kind of affirmation and acceptance that gangs offer. Helping someone leave a gang is risky. Sometimes the answer is to help the person and their family move. Remaining in the old neighborhood may not be possible – it may be life-threatening to the person and their family.

We have learned some important lessons in doing this work:

- The person needs an anchor to help them stay out or get out. They need someone who says, "You matter to me; you are worth my time, my best sense, my commitment."
- Agencies must make a commitment to work with the other people in the person's life: girlfriends, boyfriends, children, siblings, parents, friends.
- Strong mentors and role models are necessary in the person's life.
- Agencies must want something better for everyone who lives in these communities. All children look for a

[Hope, continued on page 27]

Unlimited Connections: Inclusion in the World of Dating and Romance

by Linda Dvelis

Dating, love, sex, marriage, children, families. Important life experiences. The loving relationships that can grow from a brief look or a smile across a crowded room form the fabric of our lives. But, in 1997, how many people can expect to have an enchanted evening and meet that smiling someone across a crowded room? And if the general population of interested adults has such apparently bad odds of finding "true love," what about the chances for an adult with a developmental disability?

Eleven years ago, in 1986, the Blackstone Valley Chapter (BVC) of Rhode Island Arc became the home base for Unlimited Connections, a video dating service for adults with developmental disabilities. Blackstone Valley Chapter began in the late 1940s as an informal association of parents concerned with providing for the needs of their daughters and sons with developmental disabilities. Over the years the organization has grown to serve more than 400 individuals, offering services that include job placement, residential programs, day programs, counseling and support services, and a clearinghouse for information regarding individuals with developmental disabilities. The need for a dating service grew out of BVC's success in placing individuals in the workplace. At holiday time, summer parties, and other special occasions, companies routinely throw evening parties for their employees. Parents would call BVC asking to match their son or daughter with a date for the evening. At first these matches were made the old-fashioned way, namely, based on one person's intuitive hunch. And it worked. The volume of these requests soon became such that a BVC staff member suggested a dating service, and Unlimited Connections was born.

As BVC began to set up the guidelines to support people in sharing time together through Unlimited Connections, we realized that many parents never imagined that their children would date. Dating manners – things as simple as basic social skills, table manners, knowing that you should not hurt another person's feelings – sometimes had not been learned by people using the service. In order to protect people's feelings in that all-too-vulnerable first encounter, we decided that a 5-minute videotaped interview would be a good way of screening introductions and creating interest. We explored the state-of-the-art in mid-1980s video dating, and adapted what we learned.

With funding from chapter fundraising and the United Way, Unlimited Connections has brought together hundreds of individuals, providing dating opportunities for heterosexual as well as gay, lesbian, and bisexual individuals. For an initial fee of $15, members have a 1-hour personal interview and, if suited, make a videotape responding to questions about themselves, their likes and dislikes. Some access the service as much as three times a week. In addition to dating, there is a monthly member get-together to help members meet and help out those who may be too shy to make the initial call. The get-togethers can take the form of dances or day trips, and are often the vehicle for teaching manners and respect.

While Unlimited Connections promotes dating within the community, it is never without regard for personal safety and security. Any member of the service may have their privileges suspended for reasons of "personal hygiene, aggression towards people or property, stealing or disruptive behavior." There is a reviewing committee with suspension and reinstatement criteria. Any member who uses the service can be assured that we are watching, and there are safeguards in place.

Unlimited Connections currently has over 200 members. Some members have called it quits after one relationship. One couple made it all the way to the altar. There has been a beautiful son born to one couple, and there has been one divorce. The service has won numerous state and national awards for its innovative program, and members have been interviewed by local and national media, including the television show, *20/20*. Unlimited Connections truly does seek to open up unlimited opportunities for persons with developmental disabilities to enjoy a dimension of social inclusion often overlooked yet so important to everyone, the opportunity to experience some of life's most intimate connections and most satisfying relationships.

If the general population of interested adults has such apparently bad odds of finding "true love," what about the chances for an adult with a developmental disability?

Linda Dvelis is Founder of Unlimited Connections and Director of Community Resources with Blackstone Valley Chapter, Rhode Island Arc, Pawtucket, Rhode Island. She may be reached at 401/724-7260.

Deliverance Evangelistic Church: Transforming Lives and Communities

by Harold Dean Trulear

When Pastor Benjamin Smith began the Deliverance Evangelistic Church in a North Philadelphia home in 1960, his concern was to have a church that worshipped God and served the total needs of the community. It was a wholistic vision that has grown from humble "storefront" beginnings to a ministry complex featuring a 5000-seat sanctuary and facilities that host a variety of activities. There are a myriad of programs and ministries in the church, keeping the church plant operating seven days a week. In the midst of this witness, men, women, and children with special needs have found a home.

Through nurture and attention, persons with disabilities have become preachers and teachers, ushers and choir members, contributing members of the church and society.

To understand the place of persons with developmental disabilities in the life of Deliverance, one needs to see three important dimensions of its understanding of ministry. First, the church has a history of looking for the pressing needs of people and community in developing its outreach; it seeks to say to people "God cares about you, your life, and community." It began providing food and clothing and even assistance with shelter for neighborhood residents as far back as 1962.

Second, it is a place for everyone to use their gifts and talents. Volunteerism was a major staple of Deliverance's ministry long before it was the subject of summits. Indeed, volunteers staff most of Deliverance's ministries. With this commitment to volunteerism comes a mandate for all the church's ministries to include persons who have developmental disabilities as full participants in the life of the church and community.

Third, the church is committed to forging partnerships with other institutions and agencies as it seeks to work for the betterment of the larger society. Throughout its growth from the small prayer band that first met in a family home in 1960 to the estimated 10,000 member congregation that worships in a building that fills a city block, Deliverance has sought alliance with religious and secular institutions committed to community improvement and personal transformation.

It was as a church meeting needs that the Deliverance Evangelistic Adaptive Ministries (DEAM) was launched in the mid-1980s. Frances Kent, the founding director of DEAM, is a special education teacher and active member of the church. "I started noticing people coming into our church with various developmental difficulties," she offers. She wrote a program proposal to Pastor Smith seeking authorization to begin a ministry that would address both "natural and spiritual needs." The goal of the program was to work with people on basic learning and social skills that would be necessary for them to enter the mainstream of the church's life and ministry.

Today, DEAM holds regular special worship services for its constituency where members are coached on the various aspects of the worship service, as well on points of decorum and etiquette within public worship. In their special services, the participants perform many leadership functions: public prayer, scripture reading, choral singing, and the leading of hymns. As they gain confidence in their abilities to participate in the larger Sunday morning worship, they begin to attend those services, and ultimately take leadership roles there, as well. For example, one graduate of the DEAM program takes his post regularly as a member of the greeting committee with responsibility for welcoming visitors and attending to their needs.

DEAM works hard to help members become fully included within Deliverance Church. This reflects its commitment to creating the space for all persons to exercise their gifts in the church and community. But it also has helped people with disabilities from other churches in their quest for full participation in congregational life and ministry. For instance, one young man came to DEAM already part of another congregation. His parents, both ministers, had seen his potential and had him licensed as an evangelist in their church. In DEAM, he found acceptance and motivation to further his ministry. "He had suffered brain damage as a child," says Kent, "and thought he would never amount to anything. He had felt like he was 'half a man'." At DEAM, he participated in the services and programs, gaining confidence and self-esteem. He not only shared his gifts in those special services, but also enrolled in Deliverance Evangelistic Bible Institute, the church's Bible school. He received increasing numbers of invitations to preach across the city, and was graduated with a certificate in 1991. Now married, he has a steady job and a growing ministry.

Other members of DEAM have taken courses in the Bible institute, according to institute director Dr. Joseph Ross. Kent also serves on the institute faculty and helps work with students there who have been classified as slow learners.

The teaching staff of Deliverance Evangelistic Adaptive Ministries, including two DEAM graduates, O'Rita Tompkins (standing, middle) and Rev. John Henry Owes.

Any institute students who need either remedial or specialized assistance can find it in DEAM or in the church's literacy program. The literacy program at Deliverance reflects the church's commitment to network with area institutions who share its goals of personal transformation and community empowerment. In the mid-1980s, Mayor Wilson Goode established a department on literacy for the city of Philadelphia, run from his office. The department provided training for any community group that desired to work with adult populations in basic reading and communication skills. The entire Bible institute faculty has undergone this training in order to be more sensitive to students with special needs.

When students receive their GED, they march in the procession with all of the Bible institute graduates. For many, it's the first time they've been graduated from anything.

There is also a separate literacy program at Deliverance, under the leadership of Alice Gabbadon. This program receives many adults who wish to learn to read and write. Among them are a number of adults with developmental disabilities, some of whom have suffered some brain damage through years of drug and alcohol abuse. One man who lives in an area adult group home has entered the program as part of his desire to learn and go out on his own. "You are never too old to learn," he says, and he is using his developing skills to apply for Section 8 housing. Through Deliverance Church's weekly adult Bible study, he met Gabbadon who suggested he would benefit from the literacy classes. The classes, all staffed by volunteers, both integrate the special needs population with the other students, and give the latter specialized tutelage from individual staff workers. Students can even enter the program and obtain a GED; those classes are run by another church volunteer, Carlos Jenkins, a professor of adult education at Philadelphia Community College. "Students are sent by the Mayor's Commission on Literacy," says Jenkins. "Some have learning disabilities, others have just been miseducated. Both groups need help with comprehension skills, confidence, and critical thinking. We can't change their disability, but we can teach them to think differently about their condition and what they are doing in life."

In this vein, Jenkins teaches skills such as comparison shopping as well as hosting discussions on labor practices and economic life. Most of his students are poor, and these are their real life issues. "The main goal [in these classes] is to get them to think – help them discover what they already know and get them to discuss it. Many of them have never been asked 'What do you think about this?' or 'What does that mean to you?'" says Ross. When students receive their GED, they march in the procession with all of the graduates from among the Bible institute's 600 students. Says Ross, "For many, it is the first time they've been graduated from anything."

The key to Deliverance's ministry with persons who have developmental disabilities is its multiplicity of services and the cooperation between programs. People enter through DEAM, the adult literacy program, the Bible institute or through Sunday morning or Wednesday evening church services. With a caring staff that stays networked through Dr. Ross' office, they are able to shape an individual's life at Deliverance according to their individual needs and potential. Through such nurture and attention, they become preachers and teachers, ushers and choir members, contributing members of the church and society. They are learning to think differently about themselves, and Deliverance Church has learned to think differently about them.

Harold Dean Trulear is Professor of Church and Society at New York Theological Seminary, New York City. He may be reached at 212/532-4012. For further information on Deliverance Evangelistic Adaptive Ministries contact Dr. Joseph Ross at 215/226-7600.

Cultural Inclusion: Connecting with the American Indian Community

by Matt Ziegler

Most people with developmental disabilities face huge hurdles when it comes to being included in the community. For persons with disabilities who are American Indian, one of the obstacles to social inclusion is service providers' lack of understanding and valuing of the individual's cultural background, and lack of opportunity for inclusion in community cultural programs and events. With the migration of many American Indian people to urban areas, ties to natural community support networks are often weakened. Separated from immediate family, extended family, and tribal bands, many Native people with disabilities experience separation from their cultural roots and communities. They need to have inclusive activities with meaningful cultural value for them.

American Indian people have a rich history of including all of their members in the community. For persons with disabilities who are American Indian, one of the obstacles to social inclusion is a lack of opportunities for connection with community cultural programs and events.

Arc of Hennepin County has collaborated with a number of American Indian organizations to create opportunities for persons with developmental disabilities to reconnect or maintain ties with their cultural communities. Among the organizations working together with the Arc are the Minneapolis American Indian Center, the Minneapolis Public Schools Indian Education Program, and the Minnesota Indian Women's Resource Center.

Arc of Hennepin County began working with the Minneapolis American Indian Center (MAIC) in 1991, and maintained a small office at the Center for several years. Presently, Arc and the Center refer individuals to each other. Family advocates based at the MAIC refer clients to Arc on a consistent basis and Arc, in turn, recommends programs and services of the MAIC. One example of the programs available at MAIC is Golden Eagles, a program for youth that provides culturally specific activities such as native arts and crafts, traditional dancing, and drumming. The positive outcome of this collaborative effort is an increased knowledge about available services and cultural opportunities for American Indian individuals with and without disabilities.

Arc's involvement with the Indian Education Program in the Minneapolis Public Schools has been ongoing for 7 years. Advocates from Arc meet with groups of parents of young people with disabilities from the Indian Education Program to ensure that they have a basic understanding of their parental rights under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act. This is an opportunity for the advocates to hear about problems and difficulties American Indian students and parents may be experiencing in the schools. The advocates then work directly with American Indian social workers to help resolve these issues. Advocacy services help ensure that the American Indian students receive educational services in the least restrictive environment.

The Minnesota Indian Women's Resource Center (MIWRC) has worked with Arc on providing information regarding disability issues to the parents in their programs. Advocates from Arc meet with participants in the Family First program several times each year. The Family First program is for American Indian parents who need help in working through parenting issues. Arc and MIWRC conduct a monthly support group meeting for parents of children with disabilities in which participants are encouraged to discuss concerns about themselves and their children.

Through our experiences working with American Indian community and cultural organizations, we have learned a number of lessons about how to best support social inclusion of American Indian youth and adults with developmental disabilities. Most importantly, we have learned that no one person or organization can define or speak for the whole American Indian community. This community is as diverse as the whole United States population. In the Minneapolis/St. Paul area alone there are many different tribal entities represented, each with contrasting views on who they are as a people and endemic belief systems that vary. We've learned to treat every person as an individual and avoid making broad generalizations about what they want and need.

The organizations with which we have worked have also grown in their awareness of the needs of persons with developmental disabilities. American Indian people have struggled for a long time to gain societal recognition of their right to sovereignty and to explore who they are as individuals and as peoples. Individuals with developmental disabilities share that struggle and goal. The cultural and community organizations with which we've collaborated understand that persons with disabilities, just like all American Indian people, must

have the right of self-determination and independence as individuals, as well as the right to define themselves culturally.

American Indian people have a rich history of including all of their members in the community. It is said that flags displayed at pow wows and other cultural events represent the four directions and symbolize the colors and cultures of all the people who inhabit the earth. What is needed for American Indian individuals with developmental disabilities to be included in their cultural communities is simply the opportunities and support to make those connections. Once those connections are made, they will be welcomed and experience a sense of belonging.

Matt Ziegler is an Individual Advocate at Arc of Hennepin County, Minneapolis, Minnesota. He may be reached at 612/920-0855.

Two Portraits of Cultural Inclusion

Wayne's Story

My name is Wayne Sargent. I am a 21-year-old Native American. I am Ojibwe and come from the White Earth Indian Reservation. I like to do a lot of things. One that I especially like is public speaking because it gives me an opportunity to tell others about my culture. Another interest is sports. I am on a Special Olympics weight-lifting team and train every week. I also participated as an assistant coach with the Roosevelt High School adaptive hockey league this year.

I like to be involved in a lot of things. One thing I enjoy doing is learning more about Native American culture. I am in a Native American support group through the Transition Plus program [a community-based program sponsored by school districts addressing transition needs of 18-22 year-olds] and I like that. I asked a Native American spiritualist to help me with a naming ceremony where I received a Native American name last spring. This was important to me because the name I had before was actually my stepfather's name and he is not Native American.

I have always been very interested in my culture. When I was in school, I fought to have the Chippewa language taught. I want to work with Terri Brightnose, a local dance instructor, to learn the Native American dances and get her help with my dance outfit.

John's Story

My name is John Peters and I am a member of the Cree Indian Tribe of Canada. I am 22 years old and I enjoy watching *Star Trek* on television and dancing at pow wows [pow wows are North American Indian ceremonies in which people enjoy dancing, eating, and socializing as a community]. I live with my aunt, Terri Brightnose, and she taught me to dance traditionally a couple of years ago. We have gone to more than 40 pow wows and I have placed as high as second in the traditional dance category competition. I like all the attention I get at the pow wows, especially from the girls. I meet a lot of people at pow wows and everyone is nice to me. Even the elders come up to me and tell me what a good dancer I am. I feel like I am an important person when I go to pow wows.

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"John didn't have much self-confidence when he first came to live with me," his aunt, Terri Brightnose, says. "He had a lot of troubling behaviors and temper tantrums. He has really grown and matured since he started dancing and performing at pow wows. I had to actually move John's legs to teach him how to dance at first. That was hard because I have a physical disability and am in a wheelchair. He finally caught on and look at him now! He is dancing better than people who have been dancing for many years. John never had an opportunity in his foster home to dance or to go to pow wows. Now he has friends all over the country and feels much more confident and self-assured. Once John started dancing and people were paying attention to him, he seemed to forget about the negative behaviors. He still has his moments, but they are few and far between now."

A Community of Volunteers

by Cheska Komissar, Susan Tufts, and Debra Hart

Michael lives in a supported apartment with three other roommates. He has a developmental disability and has found it difficult to meet people from his community. One day, staff from the agency that supports his apartment mentioned that employees from a local business wanted to volunteer for people with disabilities in his community. Michael was excited about meeting the group of employees who were around his age, yet he did not need people to volunteer for him. He was looking for ways to be more involved in the community; he wanted friends and colleagues, not sympathizers. One staff member suggested that the business employees volunteer *with* Michael to improve their local community, instead of volunteering *for* him.

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Volunteerism has always been a valued part of American life. Approximately 100 million Americans volunteer their time and talents each year. Despite this high number, however, most organizations utilizing volunteers still feel a shortage of people-power. Individuals with disabilities are one group that has been largely overlooked as potential volunteers. Recruiting people with disabilities cannot only help alleviate the shortage of volunteers, but can be an opportunity for valuable social experiences and a chance to give back to one's community. When people work together toward a common goal, differences are minimized and individual strengths shine. Furthermore, people who volunteer their time are viewed as giving, and both they and their contributions are respected by society.

Increasing volunteerism by persons with disabilities was the goal of Project REC (Recreation in Education and the Community) when the Mitsubishi Electric America Foundation (MEAF) agreed to fund a 1-year demonstration project in the state of Massachusetts. Project REC has been a part of the Institute for Community Inclusion, a University Affiliated Program at Children's Hospital in Boston, for the last 8 years. This primarily federally-funded project assists children and young adults (ages 3-22) with severe disabilities in gaining access to already existing social and recreation opportunities in their communities (e.g. YMCA's, Boys and Girls Clubs). Four years ago, project staff realized there was a need for assisting young adults to gain access to recreation outlets that might continue into adulthood. One major untapped resource in this regard was volunteer opportunities. The funding from MEAF enabled Project REC to expand to serve adults (ages 16 and older) in volunteer activities, as well as to develop a training guide for organizations that have volunteers, providing tips on including volunteers with disabilities.

Recruiting and managing volunteers with disabilities ideally follows much the same strategy as with any volunteers, but some specific strategies do exist, especially for working with individuals with more severe disabilities. This program profile will introduce ideas for human service professionals who want to assist individuals with disabilities in volunteer programs, as well as discuss some major areas addressed by Project REC.

Ideas for Professionals

Human service professionals can facilitate the recruitment of volunteers with disabilities by working with organizations who need volunteers. This might work in a similar way to a job placement specialist with the emphasis on developing recruitment plans that include people of all abilities and cultures while encouraging natural supports. Human service providers can assist individuals in selecting volunteer activities, match volunteers with and without disabilities, provide assistance during the activity, and introduce inclusive marketing and recruiting strategies.

Assisting individuals with the selection of volunteer opportunities is essential. The selected volunteer activity should be based on individual choice. Developing a volunteer interest survey or simply discussing personal interests can assist an individual to identify the preferred volunteer activity or organization. Potential volunteers must also be able to choose from all of the options available in their communities. Keep in mind that not all situations are culturally appropriate for everyone. For example, while hospital programs utilize thousands of volunteers every year, some cultures have negative beliefs about entering a medical facility when one is not ill. Likewise, religious organizations utilize many volunteers, but matching someone of one religious background to an organization of another religion may not be appropriate.

After an individual has selected a volunteer activity, he or she may require brief or ongoing support. Before any assistance is given, make certain that the individual actually wants assistance and determine exactly what type of assistance is desired. It is also vital to keep in mind that assistance may be offered but should never be forced. Accepting assistance should be up to the individual. Offering too much support can be counterproductive and may result in a lack of use of an individual's full potential as a volunteer. Areas in which individuals with disabilities might need assistance include, but are not limited to, maneuvering a wheelchair, learning a task, becoming familiar with a building, meeting new people or situations, getting a drink, reading information, completing written forms, getting from one place to another, making a phone call or teaching others how to communicate with the individual. It is only necessary to consider additional support for the volunteer if the activity does not naturally lend the needed support. For example, if all individuals are given a tour of an

area, an individual with a physical disability may not need any extra assistance unless accessibility is an issue. On the other hand, an individual with a cognitive disability may need to go over the tour two or three times before knowing his or her way around. It is easy to jump to the conclusion that because a person has a disability, extra assistance will be necessary. This is often not the case!

Pairing volunteers with and without disabilities has proven to be a very helpful strategy for organizations. This is especially true when volunteers have more severe disabilities or need a little more help or time to learn what is expected of them. Human service professionals can suggest that volunteer programs and organizations ask prospective volunteers whether they would like to partner with an individual with a disability. These co-volunteers can provide necessary support to the individual with the disability.

Human service providers can also make marketing and recruitment recommendations to volunteer organizations, suggesting utilizing media such as disability community publications or contacting organizations such as local independent living centers. A human service organization can offer to share expertise about appropriate formats for recruitment materials. For instance, brochures and fliers may need to be translated into other languages as well as alternative formats such as large print, Braille, computer disk or audio cassette. The most important roles human service professionals might have are promoting the understanding that recruiting individuals with disabilities is much the same as recruiting others, and calming the fears of those who have never knowingly interacted with a person with a disability.

Issues and Concerns

Through their work matching volunteers with disabilities to volunteer opportunities, Project REC staff noted several concerns that were consistently voiced by volunteers with disabilities and the organizations utilizing them. These concerns fall under three major categories: transportation, liability, and "burdening" other volunteers.

Individuals with disabilities often identify transportation as one of the main barriers to community participation. Some alternative modes of transportation do exist such as public transit, taxis, walking, biking, buddy systems, car pools, and travel training. Human service professionals can help organizations solve transportation conflicts through the recruiting and application process. For example, after encouragement from the local Arc, one environmental volunteer group decided to ask for permission to share names and numbers of those who would be willing to carpool or assist other volunteers with transportation. The organization developed a list of potential drivers and distributed it to those needing assistance.

A major concern from the perspective of volunteer organizations is that of liability. Whenever volunteers are concerned, regardless of whether or not they have a disability, some general rules apply. First, the specific issue of disability should not cause any special concern as liability is the same for individuals with and without disabilities. Insurance that covers volunteers without disabilities also covers those volunteers who have disabilities. Second, all organizations must have a set of standard safety procedures and volunteers must become familiar with these procedures. They should be written clearly with illustrations when possible, translated when necessary, and posted. This is not just a safety precaution, but sound practice for operating safe and effective organizations. Finally, volunteers must be provided adequate training and support. Human service professionals can assist organizations in understanding how to adapt training when necessary. All training instructions should be demonstrated as well as described, and should be interactive. Training may also need to be offered in other languages including American Sign Language. New volunteers might be paired with "old hands" to learn the system, especially if orientation training is not available.

A final concern expressed by many organizations is that their volunteers without disabilities may feel that the volunteers with disabilities are too much of a "burden." Project REC staff have never known a volunteer to quit because his or her co-volunteer had a disability. This may be because people who volunteer are typically caring individuals who are interested in new people and experiences. If volunteers without disabilities do voice concern, disability awareness training may be an option, but it should always be discussed with the individual who has a disability first. Some people may prefer to educate others about their disability by letting the awareness happen spontaneously through involvement with the volunteer activities.

Conclusion

So, what happened with Michael, the individual introduced at the beginning of this profile? The human service agency arranged a meeting at a local pizza place. The company volunteers were interested in meeting Michael because they had always pictured individuals with disabilities as *needing* assistance, not capable of *giving* assistance. Everyone soon forgot their nervousness and began to discuss the activities they would like to do around the neighborhood. They decided they would volunteer together one Saturday each month. As a result, Michael has participated in a variety of activities at elderly housing, homeless shelters, and the library. He also got the chance to join the company's softball team along with a fellow volunteer who has become a close friend. Michael has been able to give to his community, has made a new friend, expanded his recreation options beyond just volunteering, and, according to Michael himself, is enjoying life.

Cheska Komissar and Susan Tufts are Community Liaisons, and Debra Hart is Special Projects Coordinator, all with Project REC, Institute for Community Inclusion, Children's Hospital, Boston. They may be reached at 617/355-6281.

College Life: The New Frontier

by Mary Beth Doyle

Trinity College of Vermont is a 4-year liberal arts college established in 1925 by the Sisters of Mercy. The original purpose of the college was to educate young women for professional careers. Social justice, service, and advocacy are the building blocks upon which the college was founded. While remaining rooted in our values and historical commitment to the development of women, over time we have expanded our curricular focus to include evening and weekend degree programs where men may participate (the traditional undergraduate student body are women), community service learning programs, and educational opportunities for low-income single parents. Today, Trinity College serves more that 1500 women and men of all ages, racial and ethnic origins, and abilities each semester in its programs.

In the 1980s, members of the Trinity College community recognized that people with developmental disabilities were not being given the option to participate in the college experience. There are two core values underpinning the mission of Trinity College that compelled us to include adults with disabilities in the fabric of our community:

- The College values the preparation of students who will treasure diversity among people and who will base their valuation of others on a respect for the inherent worth of the human person.
- The College values itself as a place that calls each of its members to be accountable for her/his gifts and to use them in ways that serve the community and work toward the betterment of society.

Given such clearly articulated core values, it is incumbent upon us to make available a rich college experience to persons with developmental disabilities who want that experience. In 1989, the college launched a program to include adults with developmental disabilities in college life through a lifelong learning program called ENHANCE. ENHANCE is not a "special" education program. Rather, the primary goal is to provide equal access to college resources and equal opportunities for involvement in campus and community activities for people with developmental disabilities. Its mission statement reads:

> As a community we strive to assist individuals with disabilities who want to live, learn, work, and play as accepted members of their communities. In this process, degree seeking students (without developmental disabilities) who are tomorrow's educators, service providers, and community leaders are becoming strong advocates for the inclusion of people with disabilities. Trinity's programs reflect the belief that anyone with the desire for continued learning should be provided the opportunity to do so.

As a college community, we believe that disability is one of many characteristics of an individual, and we welcome the whole person.

Approximately 15 students per semester are enrolled in the ENHANCE program. The majority are commuters, although typically one or two live on campus in the dormitories. As with all college students, ENHANCE students are enrolled (using the audit option) in a variety of courses, maintain part-time employment or volunteer work, and earn credits toward a certificate received at graduation. After earning 72 credits, every ENHANCE student participates in graduation exercises. As with all college students, walking across that stage in academic regalia and shaking our president's hand is a highlight of the college experience. The sense of pride and accomplishment is shared by all.

The programmatic support for ENHANCE students in their academic classes is determined individually. The most common type of support comes from peer partners enrolled in the same classes. These peer partners function similarly to peer tutors. In the dormitories, each ENHANCE student receives the same support as students without disabilities (e.g., resident assistant, resident director). Additionally, a student without disabilities shares a suite with the ENHANCE student and is paid a stipend to provide specific support in the skills of daily living. This assistance is individualized, ranging from support in planning a weekly calendar to doing laundry to figuring out what is most appropriate to wear to a campus event.

While we are creating opportunities for all interested individuals to experience the joys and struggles of living in a diverse community, it is also true that we struggle on a daily basis to understand each other and to problem solve issues as they emerge. For example, currently we have found ourselves at an interesting juncture where it is time to make significant improvements in the coordination of support, particularly related to the area of social inclusion for both residential and commuter students with developmental disabilities. Specifically, we have noticed that the nature of the majority of social relationships between students with and without disabilities is unidirectional and helping in nature, as contrasted with reciprocal. In response to this awareness, a discussion was arranged with students living in the dormitory where one ENHANCE student was living. The majority of the students living there attended and offered their thoughts on friendship and community. It was apparent that unknowingly many students without disabilities carried a sense of pity for their dorm-mate who had a disability. The manifestation of the pity was a tendency to "take care of her" and to "be nice to her no matter what." Although their intentions were good, what was really happening was that the sense of pity was acting as a barrier to students getting to

know each other as equals. Faculty at Trinity believe strongly in the power of reflective dialogue such as this one. In that spirit, we will continue to have conversations with all students about the nature and importance of friendship.

At Trinity College programs like ENHANCE easily become part of the fabric of the community. This is because we are all so clear about our core values and we have the support to operationalize those values on a daily basis.

Mary Beth Doyle is Assistant Professor of Education and Advisor to the ENHANCE Program at Trinity College, Burlington, Vermont. She may be reached at 802/658-0337.

College, My Disability, and Tracy

Michelle and one of her many college friends, her "friend for life" Janice.

Michelle Sommerstein was a student at Trinity College from 1993-1995. She was enrolled through the ENHANCE option, lived in the dormitories, and participated in college activities. As with most college students, Michelle can tell you all about the joys and pains of college life. Rather than focusing on the many aspects of her college experiences that went smoothly, we have decided to share one of her struggles. We hope that by sharing this part of the story that readers will take pause and remember that creating community certainly is rewarding, but it is also challenging. This struggle and Michelle's ability to advocate for herself had a significant effect on the Trinity College community. She made a difference in our lives. Following is Michelle's perspective on how she dealt with one of the most significant conflicts of her college career – an issue related to support and the skewed perception of friendship. This story was written by Michelle for the college newspaper, with the assistance of Tracy.

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Let's start by saying college is great! I have a lot of friends and my classes are really fun. I volunteer twice a week at Mater Christi Elementary School. I have lots of fun serving lunch to kids. I also gave a class on country line dancing at the beginning of the semester. That was fun too! My favorite thing to do is watch movies with my friends over at Mercy Hall. My favorite class is Women's Journey with Laurie Gagne....It is my favorite class because it will help me with my "Woman's Journey"!

There are a few things that I wish people could understand about me and my disability. I am a very nice person, but I know that my disability makes me talk weird, and sometimes I don't say the right things. I know that sometimes I say things that aren't true. I really don't mean to do this, but I want to say something and sometimes the words come out before I can think about them. I really want to fit in her[illegible]but sometimes I need help from you to give me the words to say so I don't say the wrong things. I wish you would say, "Mich, why don't you say this instead of what you just said." I won't be mad if you do this. My disability makes it a hard for me to know what to say because my head messes up words before they come out.

And about Tracy (my suitemate). Tracy is not mean to me. I know that sometimes it seems that way because she doesn't do everything for me. Would you like it if someone did everything for you? I want to do things by myself. It takes me a few times, but I do get it right and Tracy knows I can. That's why she makes me do it. I know that some people think Tracy is mean because she doesn't eat dinner with me. Maybe I don't want to eat dinner with her – maybe I want to eat with my other friends! If I had to do everything with her all of the time, then she would be mean! I am not a baby. I can do things on my own. Tracy is being nice to me because she lets me have my own friends and my own life. I like not having to do everything with only one person.

I just want to tell everyone that the biggest way you can help me and anyone with a disability is just to RELAX, CHILL OUT and HAVE FUN! Don't try to act "normal," just act natural!!!!

Social Inclusion in a High School: The Peer Connections Program

by Joy Keachie

Two years ago, social inclusion at Eden Prairie High School began to change dramatically. Students with mild to severe cognitive and physical disabilities had been included in regular education classes for many years, but needed more opportunities for social inclusion. Those opportunities began to open up when the school board approved adoption of the Yes I Can program developed by the University of Minnesota's Institute on Community Integration.

The program, offered by the Family and Consumer Education Department as a class named Peer Connections, is designed to facilitate social connections between students with and without disabilities, both in and out of school. The primary goal of this class is interaction. Students work together in and out of class on activities designed to build relationships and understanding between students, and to assist those with disabilities in developing their social skills in natural settings. The class meets daily with a focus on learning about disabilities and removing some of the barriers to social inclusion. Guest speakers, videotapes, and a variety of activities are used to provide opportunities for students to learn about each other.

Students with more severe disabilities are identified as the "target peers" who, through the class, improve their social inclusion. The other students in the class with mild disabilities or without a disability are considered the "peer facilitators" who support those inclusion efforts. The class is divided into two groups that each meet for half of a class period (approximately 40 minutes). Target peers attend a work readiness class the other half of the period, some students with IEP's attend a special education class the other half, and the rest have a half period free or act as peer tutors in physical education classes with students with disabilities.

A key component of the program is that target peers and peer facilitators plan and carry out weekly activities designed to increase social inclusion. Examples of activities include attending a school sports event with several friends, eating lunch together at school, visiting each other's homes, going to a movie or concert, and planning a "boy-girl" party at a target peer's home.

Students, teachers, and parents have shared their excitement about changes they have seen in the target students since the class began in September of 1995. Parents have told about their children with disabilities experiencing other students stopping to talk to them at the store, church, and restaurants or honking and waving to them when they see each other in the car. Parents have also noticed the excitement their children feel over getting out in the community with their peers. As one students has noted, "It's fun to get to see people, both inside and outside of class and get to know them well. Like sitting and eating with them in the lunchroom. Now I know people when I go places, and have someone to talk to." Teachers have noticed that the social networks of the target students have gotten broader. As one target student has pointed out, "I've made a lot of friends through the Peer Connections program because people in the program introduce me to their friends, and then they become my friends." Teachers have noticed that often target peers become part of the social circle of the peer facilitators.

The peer facilitators have commented to the teachers, their friends, and families about how much they have learned about their peers and themselves in the process. They have told about advocating for their target peers in situations involving harassment, gossiping, or teasing. Most of them have maintained contact with the target peers after they are no longer in class. Several students, after participating in the class, have decided on careers that involve people with disabilities. Students without disabilities and with milder disabilities have gained self-esteem by helping their peers and participating in activities both in and out of class.

Teachers are noting that target peers and peer facilitators alike are more willing to speak in front of the class and take other risks. Administrators have commented on the dramatic decrease in the number of incidents in which target peers are victims. Teachers and teaching assistants are thrilled with the changes they are seeing in all of the students.

The social experiences and social skills that students have in middle school and high school have a lasting impact on the quality of their social lives as adults in the community. The ability to make and keep friends is something that can make the difference between a full life and a lonely life. For friendships to happen between persons with and without disabilities, there have to be opportunities to connect, the confidence to reach out and make those connections, and the knowledge and skills that are needed for communication and companionship to take place. Using the Yes I Can program, the Peer Connections class is teaching students at Eden Prairie High School how to cross the barriers to social inclusion that are so common for students with disabilities, and how to build friendships and community now and in the future.

Joy Keachie is a Special Education teacher at Eden Prairie High School, Eden Prairie, Minnesota. For additional information on the Peer Connections class, contact Joy or Wrenetta Dietz at 612/975-8000. To learn more about the Yes I Can program developed at the Institute on Community Integration, call Brian Abery at 612/625-5592.

Pals, Parties, and Proms

Chris is a young man with Down syndrome who functions in the mild to moderate range of mental impairment, and has completed his second year of the Peer Connections class. He is in the 11th grade at Eden Prairie High School and has been in inclusive settings much of his day since kindergarten.

Before coming to Peer Connections, Chris had developed his communication skills and had always been a very social person. Although he had had many inclusion opportunities with his family, at school, and in small group social skills classes, he was still having some difficulty in the social skills area. He would "switch" from age appropriate behavior to acting very immature when he was feeling uncomfortable or when he had an "audience." He would run from adults when he knew he had done something wrong or was upset with someone, and would hide in hallways or under desks, tables, and sewing machines before and during class. He seemed to enjoy his role as the "clown" and the attention he was receiving, negative as it was.

The changes in Chris during his two years in Peer Connections have been dramatic! He became friends with a young man who was a senior and in the Peer Connections class. T.J. and Chris really bonded. The Peer Connections teachers asked T.J. to help Chris understand that his behavior wasn't really getting him what he wanted. When T.J. would ask him to "get it together", or remind him that it wasn't cool, Chris was usually able to comply. In addition to being peer partners for many of the activities in class, T.J. made time for Chris outside of class: he brought a friend to watch Chris' adaptive rec team play soccer, arranged to pick him up and take him out to get something to eat and play video games at an arcade at the mall, had dinner with Chris' family, took Chris to an amusement park, and talked to him often in school and on the phone. When Chris began his person-centered social inclusion planning process, he wanted T.J. to be a part of his team. By being a good friend and role model for Chris, T.J. was able to help Chris learn appropriate behaviors both in and out of school. By the end of the second quarter that they knew each other, Chris was no longer hiding in or out of the classroom. His inappropriate behaviors almost disappeared and he became a leader in the classroom and in the Y's Act drama group after school.

As part of his person-centered inclusion planning process, Chris indicated that he liked to bowl, go to movies, and dance, and that there was a girl in his class that liked the same things. T.J. helped Chris and his mother plan dates with the girl, plan a boy – girl party for friends with and without disabilities to include dancing at his house, and make plans for the prom. Chris and his date spent some time with T.J. and his date at the prom, but were equally comfortable with other peers who were there. It was really exciting to see the maturation that took place in such a short time.

This past year Chris became a facilitator in the Peer Connections class. He showed amazing maturity in class and other settings in the school working with the students that are younger or have more severe disabilities than his. One of the other students from his group chose him to be on her person-centered inclusion planning team, and he has been one of the most helpful people on her team. Chris has not only developed his own social skills and self-esteem, he is reaching out to others with and without disabilities and building a network of friends.

Last spring, he didn't need any help getting a date for the prom. He and another student with a developmental disability had lots of fun planning for the prom with their parents. He told me that he rented a royal blue tux because his date's dress was royal blue.

Chris has really learned from his peer friends. He's becoming more independent, accepting more responsibility, sharing his knowledge with other students, and enjoying high school life.

Contributed by Joy Keachie, Eden Prairie High School

One Employer's Commitment to Inclusion

by Ann M. Bauer

Perhaps the best indicator of the success of Target Stores' national initiative to hire workers with disabilities is that Greg Peterson had no idea it existed. Peterson is team relations leader of the St. Louis Park, Minnesota, Target store and supervisor of three workers with significant disabilities.

In the 3 years he's been working as a manager for the huge retail chain, Peterson has worked at three of the Minneapolis-based company's Twin Cities stores. And he has consistently hired employees who reflect the diversity of the large metropolitan community surrounding his stores – workers from a world of different racial, ethnic, and religious backgrounds, as well as workers with a range and variety of skills, talents and abilities. "I don't ask for personal information when a candidate with a disability comes to me for an interview," Peterson says. "I certainly don't need to know the name of their disability. What is important for me is to know what the limitations are, if any, so I can find them the right position. Because I often have a variety of positions open, all I need to do is fit the specific individual to a job. That means placing each person according to his or her strengths." This general attitude is shared by personnel managers throughout the organization. And it means that Target is open to hiring those who have not had the opportunity to amass a traditional work background. Candidates may offer as experience the training they received through workshops, agency classes, school-to-work programs or internships.

I certainly don't need to know the name of their disability. All I need to do is fit the specific individual to a job. That means placing each person according to his or her strengths.

Though Dayton Hudson, Target's parent company, is well known for its community activism, officials insist the practice of hiring workers with disabilities is not a philanthropic crusade – it's simply good business. First, there is the clear, positive response from the shopping public: people like to shop in stores where the employee population reflects *them*. In addition, Target managers have discovered that workers with disabilities tend to be more conscientious and steadfast than many of their counterparts. Like Joel Yellowhammer-Kozel (see sidebar), non-traditional employees often are extremely appreciative of the opportunity to work, earn money, and live independently. While other service workers tend to switch jobs frequently, those who come through social service programs often desire the security of long-term employment. Target's experience employing workers who have special needs proves that it can be a win-win situation: people who desperately want to work get jobs, and the company profits from the efforts of employees who are unusually prompt, interested in their tasks, and attentive to detail. "I've found that these individuals often stay more focused than the average employee," comments Peterson. "They really pride themselves on doing their jobs well."

The formal policy for Target Stores from coast to coast states that they will employ at least one worker with a significant disability in a visible position at every location in the country. But, as far as anyone at Target headquarters can recall, this is a policy that has never appeared in their literature or been mandated at corporate meetings – no one checks up on the individual stores to determine whether or not team leaders are adhering to the rule. Instead of forcing this initiative onto unwilling managers, Target has built disability awareness into the culture of the organization. Best estimates indicate that most stores actually far exceed the stated goal.

One reason diversity in hiring has been so successful is that this company's comprehensive training program was designed to work effectively for all new employees. At Target, team leaders hire job applicants with certain positions in mind; they rely on their experience and intuition to match each new employee with the right set of tasks and responsibilities. Then, every new hire is assigned a job coach to take him or her through the first week(s) of employment. If, after a few weeks, the new employee is *not* working well in the assigned position, the store's managers will look for a way to transfer the employee into a more appropriate area. "If I have an employee who is here on time and dedicated and really trying to do the job, but their position for some reason is not working out, I'll look for another position for them within our store," says Peterson.

And the teamwork concept, utilized by Target for training purposes, appears to carry over to the social lives of employees. The general diversity of the workforce has fostered friendships in an environment that integrates employees with disabilities into a community that extends beyond the workplace.

In 1993, Dayton Hudson officials were invited by Attorney General Janet Reno to participate in the third anniversary celebration of the passage of the Americans with Disabilities Act in Washington D.C. Reno praised Target's long history of supporting and accommodating persons with disabilities. The corporation also has received Employer of the Year citations from the Association for Retarded Citizens and United Cerebral Palsy of Minnesota, and just last year the company won its third EDI

Award for Corporate Leadership from the National Easter Seal Society. "Our continual mission is to encourage the abilities of all people, both as team members and guests who shop in our stores," writes Gail Dorn, Target vice president of communications and community relations. And day by day Target Stores, along with other forward-thinking companies, is opening up employment opportunities for all and ultimately building a more inclusive society.

Ann M. Bauer is a freelance writer living in Minneapolis. For information about Target Stores employee programs, contact Target, Human Resources Department, 33 S. 6th Street, Minneapolis, MN 55440-1392.

Loving the Challenge, Finding Success

My name is Joel Yellowhammer-Kozel. I work as a greeter and an asset protection specialist at the Target store in St. Louis Park, Minnesota. I love my job. It gives me a chance to meet and greet the public. I like talking to the people who shop here and I like having the opportunity to work and make money. I really like my co-workers and my employers, too.

I've been working in asset protection ever since I started at Target over a year ago. Once you get this position down, it's not too hard. I sit by the door and talk to the people who come into the store; I thank them for coming in as they're leaving. Then whenever the alarm sounds on the door, I have a log book and I have to mark down a category for why the alarm went off. This is the toughest part of the job. It involves stopping people who are going out the door when the alarm goes off and checking everything in their carts. Sometimes I just mark down cashier error, which means someone forgot to pass an item over the deactivation pad. But if there's something in the bag or the cart that isn't on their receipt, it's my job to recover it without offending the guest. So, I have to use some tact. I just say, "Excuse me, I'm sorry but I have to know why the alarm went off." Most people are okay about it. A lot of them just made an honest mistake and forgot to pay for something in their carts.

The one accommodation Target made for me is that they provide me with a chair to sit on at the front door. I walk with braces and I would have problems standing for long periods of time because of my cerebral palsy. But other than that one thing, I do the job just like any other worker in my area.

I first came to Target with a caseworker from Accessibility Incorporated. This is an agency that helps people with physical and mental disabilities find employment. I started out working in Accessibility Incorporated's sheltered workshop, doing things like collating, data entry, and packaging. I worked there for about a year and a half, and it was good experience.

Before that, I worked for five summers through the Minnesota Youth Employment program at the Leech Lake Area Chamber of Commerce. Most of what I did was help with their mailing lists, stuffing envelopes and updating their records. That was during the time I was in high school, and then attending Crookston College which is a satellite of the University of Minnesota. I might have stayed in outstate Minnesota, but I developed a chemical dependency problem and my mother sent me to the treatment center in Minneapolis. After that, I moved into a day treatment program.

I think coming here, to the Twin Cities, turned out to be a great thing for me. I still go to AA and I attend three groups a week to keep me chemically-free. My mom lives here now, too, and she's very proud of what I'm doing.

I like my job at Target more than any other I've ever had in my life. First, because I get paid a lot more money, and I am looking ahead to the possibility of advancement. But also because it's more challenging. I have to be more attentive and busy than I did at the workshop; at Target, there's no one standing over me supervising me, so I have to be sure to get my work done on my own.

I'm also in an apartment training program through an agency and I'm learning how to clean and cook. Right now I live in an efficiency apartment but it's an assisted living program. I really want to get into an apartment completely on my own. I want to be able to choose where I live. This program will teach me how to live on my own. And if I need any renovations done on my new apartment, like having counters moved in the kitchen so I can work at them more easily, the agency will help me get that done, too.

My advice for other people out there who are looking for job opportunities like mine is do what you're told, both by the people at the agencies and by your supervisors once you get into a position. Rely on your co-workers to tell you what you're doing right and what you're doing wrong. Stay on your medications – that's very important. Work hard every day and things will start to go your way.

By Joel Yellowhammer-Kozel as told to Ann M. Bauer

Inclusion in a Family Business

by John Labalestra

Lido's Cafe is a small, family-run Italian restaurant in the St. Paul, Minnesota, suburb of Roseville. Our family built Lido's Cafe in 1956 and my first job at age 9 was to help with the construction and clean-up. I got $1 at the end of the week and thought it was big money. And it was for a 9-year-old. For those of you who can remember the 1950s, $1 would buy a lot of Popsicles and chewing gum, and an occasional special offer via Howdy Doody Time.

When hiring employees with disabilities, we hire to meet the job requirements, not because of any special program that we have to hire persons with disabilities.

Back then, I was raised in the traditional depression method. Jobs were scarce (even though it was the booming '50s). Nobody complained about the minimum wage, very few complained about the assigned hours or number of hours worked. Everybody was willing to do whatever it took to get the job done. Time off was not a major problem because you took care of it yourself; it was your responsibility to find someone to work for you. If you couldn't, you worked. And most things done were done the "right way." That was the 1950s.

Then came the '60s, '70s, '80s, and now the pre-millennium. During the decades since my first job many major changes have taken place that make it much more difficult to hire, train, and keep good employees. There has been more competition for fewer jobs, shifts in attitudes toward work, more permissive parenting, changes in government regulations, and more regulations, including regulations to regulate the regulator! The net effect for business has been a general employment work pool that is more difficult to work with for many food service employers.

In this decade, food service managers have begun to hire more persons with disabilities, first out of necessity and then out of an awakening. Managers have learned that employees with disabilities not only can do many of the jobs of food service, but do them as well, if not better, than their nondisabled counterparts. In addition, many employees with disabilities actually love their jobs and their work environments. It seems to me that employees with disabilities also mirror the camaraderie and commitment to work that I experienced in the 1950s. Those I've worked with are more focused on the experience of the workplace than on the money alone. They seem to have more positive attitudes and attend better to details than many of their peers without disabilities, desperately needed traits in quality food service. So, in hiring employees with disabilities at Lido's Cafe, we hire to meet the job requirements, not because of any special program that we have to hire persons with disabilities.

Socially, experiences can be varied for employees with disabilities. In the earlier years when the job market was not as competitive, we were able to plan social activities for employees. We often bought tickets to baseball or football games and went as a group. Because of economics and the increasing need to make every moment productive, we have had to eliminate not only planned social activities, but also much of the down time for informal interaction during work hours.

As with all people, the degree of social interaction and participation in social activities with coworkers varies. Some employees with disabilities are very social. One of our employees has worked for us for 20 years. He has paraplegia, a hearing impairment, and does not speak. He finds unique ways to interact and communicate with others. He is a sports fan and often brings in the schedules of baseball and football games for all of the employees. This is a way for others to respond to him about a shared interest. On Saturdays he will come in hours early, stopping at the local grocer for soda for everyone. He enjoys the sharing and contributing that is later reciprocated. He is also our self-appointed "police officer." He is so sharp about the correct operation of the kitchen that he will indicate when someone is not doing the right thing. For instance, if the china is being placed on the return shelf with pots and pans, he knows that it should not be there because it is likely to get chipped. He will stop and make a "bip, bip, bip" sound to get the offender to notice the mistake.

Another of our workers with a disability finds it more difficult to interact socially. I can say with affection that he has a belligerent streak. What others have found works with him is to explain the reason for doing things in a specific way. I think it is not only the explanation, but also the time spent individually that supports him personally.

One of my favorite employees was a young man with Down syndrome. His socializing was a very important part of his job. He had such a sense of humor that I used to tell him if I was an agent I'd put him on stage and we'd make a lot of money. He derived much satisfaction in life and work from humor. No one could match his one-liners. He has left the restaurant because of a health issue, but continues to call and say "hi."

In working with employees with disabilities I've learned some things that I'd offer as suggestion to other employers. First, training should be done at the pace of the employee. The trainer needs to be extremely patient and thorough. Also, actual job performance should be

monitored with corrective action taken immediately in a kind, supportive manner. Humor should be used when possible and appropriate. Rewards should be frequent and sincere. If an employee has a continuous difficulty with a task, then the task should be downgraded in importance for that employee and assigned to someone else on a temporary basis, making the task a goal for later development. Jobs should be varied and tailored to the skill level (and potential skill level) of the employee. Competition among employees with disabilities probably should be held to a minimum. And lastly, training of the employees without disabilities regarding what to expect from their coworkers who have disabilities needs to be offered.

Today, quite frankly, if it were not for the employees with disabilities, many food service operations would close their doors. What seemed to make employees successful in the 1950s was the work ethic that I still find in employees who have disabilities. Those I've worked with are interested learners, apply their skills with great attention to detail, seldom complain, arrive early, work hard, and reflect genuine satisfaction when complimented on a job well done. And they still believe in "a day's work for a day's pay."

John Labalestra is owner of Lido's Cafe in Roseville, Minnesota. He may be reached at 612/636-9721.

"The Lasagna Man"

Lido's hired me about 3 years ago. My job is important to me. The money I earn gives me a chance to buy things I like, go places I like to go, and have more say in my life than I would without it. I do like to earn money. It is also important for me to feel that I can do something well. Cooking has always been something I did at home with my mom and dad. When people wanted to know what I wanted to do for a job, I told them I wanted to be a chef.

I had worked at many places before Lido's. I worked at McDonalds, a candle-making shop, the Department of Transportation mail room, and two other restaurants. I liked office work, too, but I had more confidence in the kitchen. Some of the jobs I had were okay, but I didn't get a paycheck and they were called job experiences. Some of them were too fast, and there was no one to take time with me to help me learn and get better.

When I started at Lido's, they helped me find out what I could do. I didn't have a job coach then, but I had a school case manager who met with my boss and the three of us talked about some of my good points and some of the things I was not so good at. I really don't like to have lots of people order me around and make me feel stupid when I do things wrong. It is much better when there is one person who can take the time to show me what to do, and who, when I get angry or upset, will take the time to talk to me. The head chef at Lido's sat down and had a meeting with my case manager and me every week in the beginning. That helped me very much. After awhile, I was making the lasagna on Mondays, Wednesdays, and Fridays – the days I work. They even call me "the lasagna man." Some days I cut vegetables and weigh chicken or pasta. Some days I need to do dishes part of the day. Now we don't meet every week, just when we need to.

The owner and his mom and other family make time to talk to me when I have a problem. They also tell me when things are going good. I have gotten two or three raises since I started, and I now make $6.50 an hour. Lots of people help me out when I get behind and joke with me during lunch. I sometimes take a break and go outside to smoke a cigar and talk with the other workers.

I now have a job coach because I moved out of my family's house and live on my own. I needed transportation to work and they said I also needed to take a job coach. That made me angry at first, but she is working with me to get faster and better at things, and on how to work with the other workers. I have a point system that when I earn so many points, I can earn raises. Mostly what I like about Lido's is that they don't push me to work faster than I can. Sometimes in other jobs I could do certain things and they would get upset with me and I would get upset. I also like that I can talk to people and ask things.

For me the best part of working at Lido's is that the people are fun and most of the time make me feel good about how I work.

Contributed by Christian Schoeller, St. Paul, Minnesota

Social Inclusion Through Self-Advocacy

by John G. Smith and Irving Martin

The notion of being included in the community implies that persons with developmental disabilities are not only present and actively involved in community activities, but also that they are recognized as persons of strength with many capacities. Self-advocacy groups are community organizations that provide persons with developmental disabilities information about their rights as members of the community, opportunities to meet and develop friendships with persons who have similar disabilities, and strategies to work together to change their communities to be more inclusive. These self-advocacy organizations are very similar to other community groups that many people join in order to make friends and feel included such as church groups, political organizations, recreation groups, singles clubs, or business groups. Self-advocacy organizations are different in that most members, and more importantly their leaders, are persons who have developmental disabilities.

Irving Martin has been a leader of the self-advocacy movement of persons with developmental disabilities both in his home state of Minnesota, and nationally, for several years. "My involvement began almost 25 years ago when I attended a national self-advocacy conference. I met other people with developmental disabilities from other parts of the United States who were starting self-advocacy groups, and learned what self-advocacy organizations had to offer," he recalls. Following this conference, he returned to St. Paul, Minnesota, and started a local self-advocacy group for persons with developmental disabilities.

Irving has since assisted self-advocacy groups to get started in several Minnesota communities, and served as the President of People First-Ramsey County, the group he initiated. He also was a founding member and served as President of People First of Minnesota, a statewide organization promoting formation of self-advocacy chapters for persons with developmental disabilities in communities across the state. He has traveled throughout the United States, as well as to England and Japan to attend self-advocacy conferences, regularly receives invitations to give presentations to a variety of groups, and has served as an advisor to state and federal policymakers regarding services to persons with developmental disabilities.

In reflecting on the ways his involvement in the self-advocacy movement has enhanced his feelings of social inclusion, Irving cites many examples. "My involvement in self-advocacy has shown me that people have confidence in me and in my ideas. This has increased the confidence I have in myself. My involvement in self-advocacy activities has given me opportunities to both learn from and teach others how to solve problems and receive support when facing the discrimination that persons with developmental disabilities sometimes encounter in community settings. In self-advocacy groups members teach one another what to do when things go wrong, and how to pick-up the pieces and go on in facing the problems that life in the community sometimes entails. Self-advocacy has also taught me how to be political, and to do things that add meaning to my life. I've learned leadership skills through self-advocacy activities, such as being able to explain myself clearly, and to listen to others. And self-advocacy has also given me an opportunity to be a volunteer and give back to my community. I talk to groups of parents who have young children with disabilities to teach them what to expect for their child, and how to advocate for the services their child needs. I feel very happy and proud when giving these presentations and have friendships with several parents and families."

When asked about other people he has met through his involvement in self-advocacy activities who have had a significant impact on his life, Irving's mind first goes to another person with a disability: "I have a friend who knows a lot about the political process and he's

taught me ways to influence policymakers. I've also met and have become friends with the Director of the Minnesota Governor's Council on Developmental Disabilities, and with a lawyer who served as an advisor to a self- advocacy group I was a member of. All the people I've met through the self-advocacy movement have helped me to create my own vision of community, and how persons with developmental disabilities ought to be included in the life of the community. They've also taught me how to love myself, how to speak to others about my beliefs, and to feel supported in my community."

Irving knows that he's not the only one who has benefited from his self-advocacy activities. Young persons with disabilities – such as the children of the parents to whom he speaks – will have an easier time finding their rightful place in the community because of the work done by he and others involved in the self-advocacy movement.

John G. Smith is a Project Coordinator with the Institute on Community Integration, University of Minnesota. He may be reached at 612/624-0219. Irving Martin is Vice Chair of the Minnesota Governor's Council on Developmental Disabilities, and a board member of People First of Minnesota. He lives in St. Paul.

Social Inclusion Resources

- **Utilizing All Your Resources: Individuals With and Without Disabilities Volunteering Together** (1996). By Cheska Komissar, Robin Friedlander, and Debra Hart. A manual that discusses strategies for enabling individuals with and without disabilities to volunteer together in their communities for fun and civic service. Topics covered include recruiting, training, liability, challenges, and coordinating volunteers. Available from Institute for Community Inclusion, Children's Hospital, Boston • 617/355-6506 (voice), 617/355-6956 (TTY).
- **Don't Forget the Fun: Developing Inclusive Recreation** (available November 1997). By Cheska Komissar, Robin Friedlander, and Debra Hart. A guide providing general ideas for advocating for, providing, and participating in inclusive community recreation. Available from Institute for Community Inclusion, Children's Hospital, Boston • 617/355-6506 (voice), 617/355-6956 (TTY).
- **Friendships and Community Connections Between People With and Without Developmental Disabilities** (1993). By Angela Novak Amado. A book offering practical and natural ways to promote the mutual benefits of friendships between persons with developmental disabilities and others in the community. Available from PCI Educational Publishing • 800/594-4263, 210/653-8282 (fax).
- **Yes I Can Social Inclusion Curriculum** (1997). By Brian Abery, Kris Schoeller, Erin Simunds, Vicki Gaylord, and Maurice Fahnestock. A year-long, 20-module curriculum designed to bring about the social inclusion of junior and senior high school students with disabilities in school and community settings. Students with and without disabilities come together for weekly classroom instruction and community experiences that increase understanding of the social inclusion needs and challenges experienced by persons with disabilities, and the interpersonal skills needed for successful relationships. During the program, each student with a disability who desires greater social inclusion is paired with another student who serves as an inclusion facilitator. Inclusion facilitators, who may be students with or without disabilities, serve as support and community companions during weekly community outings planned by each student pair. The curriculum manual includes detailed lesson plans and master copies of materials. It is designed to guide teachers and community organization staff in fully implementing the curriculum. For those who desire additional implementation support, technical assistance and on-site training for instructors are available. Available from Institute on Community Integration, University of Minnesota, Minneapolis • 612/624-4512 (voice), 612/624-9344 (fax).
- **Weaving the Tapestry: A Training Manual for Person-Centered Social Inclusion Planning** (available winter 1998). By Brian Abery, Maurice Fahnestock, Dawna Phillips, Marijo McBride, and Ann Eggebeen. The Person-Centered Social Inclusion Planning process is designed to enhance the social inclusion of individuals with disabilities. The process involves important people in the individual's life who come together with the individual to explore goals, dreams, and opportunities for social inclusion, as well as develop and implement a social inclusion plan. The manual includes a rationale for using person-centered social inclusion planning, a step-by-step guide to the process, and master copies of planning materials. Available from Institute on Community Integration, University of Minnesota, Minneapolis • 612/624-4512 (voice), 612/624-9344 (fax).

[James, continued from page 1]

James had attended special education classes in the Atlanta Public School System, but left at age 16. "I got in a lot of fights, and I could tell they didn't want me there, so I left." He was then in and out of mental health services, and given various medications to calm him down. The doctor at the mental health center has advocated declaring him incompetent "...so that we can ensure he takes his medication." Compliance is a big issue with James' doctor. I have argued with the doctor that taking his rights away will not make him comply or take his medication. I say that taking his power and responsibility away will make the situation worse. This argument continues.

James' outreach specialist at the Atlanta Alliance on Developmental Disabilities (AADD) has worked with him for 3 years. He has her home number and calls to talk things out. She tries to help him and his family work it out. His employment specialist helps him look for work. James and the AADD workers have a strong relationship. Their discussions are candid and private. They have worked hard to earn his trust, and offer honesty and a commitment to be there.

At one point James moved in with his grandmother and said he wanted out of the gang. "I don't want anything happening to her. She has been so good to me. She loves me no matter what, just for me. Some of my family just want my check or try to give me a hard time. I don't blame them cause they have problems too. But she has always looked out for me. She's not my blood kin – she was my grandfather's second wife – but she has always treated me like I'm her own." His grandmother found a house with a basement apartment and sold her old house. James would live downstairs, have some privacy. She would be close so she could help him. This worked for 9 months. Then she had an allergic reaction to medication and was hospitalized for a month. She came home for a few days, then became ill again. She was hospitalized again, and died.

James was lost. His anchor, his most important relationship was gone. His grandmother's son said James could come live with him. "My mother would have wanted me to look out for him." Things are not smooth. Some days James is back with the gang, other days he is committed to staying away. James and the people in his life are taking it a day at a time. A day at a time is what we are given. Time will tell if it is enough.

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[Abery, continued from page 3]

interactions with members of the community without disabilities have been found be quite limited and to contribute in only an extremely limited manner to the quality of life experienced. Regardless of the age of the individual in question, the social networks of persons with developmental disabilities have been found to be much smaller than those of peers without disabilities and to contain significantly fewer reciprocal contacts. Community-based activities, while relatively frequent, appear to primarily take place in large groups with fellow residents under the supervision of staff. There also appear to be distinctive differences in the composition of the social networks of persons with and without developmental disabilities, with the latter group having a much higher proportion of their social interactions with paid staff or family members than individuals with no disability label.

Despite a physical presence within the community, most persons with developmental disabilities appear to have few intimate relationships with persons without disabilities and to spend the majority of their time in the community interacting with other individuals with disabilities within segregated groupings. This situation characterizes the lives of persons with developmental disabilities whether they are children or adults, attending school, receiving community-based services, or living at home with their families. Even more discouraging are findings suggesting that when such persons do establish social relationships with members of the community, they often experience a difficult time maintaining friendships that are developed.

Working to Enhance Social Inclusion

There is no "quick fix" that can be prescribed to enhance social inclusion. A program, process, tool, or technique that works with one individual in a particular setting may not be effective with another. In a similar manner, strategies that promote the social inclusion of persons from one culture may not provide the necessary ingredients for individuals who are members of other cultures/ethnic groups to experience a sense of belonging. Success in facilitating an individual realizing his or her personal vision of social inclusion is therefore likely to require the use of numerous approaches and strategies. Long-term change in the manner in which persons with developmental disabilities are perceived and treated within our society will also be necessary. The fact that there is no "best" practice to enhance social inclusion that can be applied to all persons with developmental disabilities will, at times, lead to frustration on the part of both those desiring greater inclusion and professionals attempting to foster positive change within this area. It is, however, unavoidable as a result of the different social needs and desires of each individual and the fact that, as much as we desire to enhance social inclusion, this will only be possible when society at large learns to better appreciate the unique capacities, gifts, and talents of its members with disabilities.

When supporting enhanced social inclusion, not every person will need to be the recipient of intensive intervention efforts to achieve their visions within this area of life. A number of individuals with disabilities with whom the author has worked, for example, have been

able to create their own means of enhancing their social inclusion through setting priorities on building friendships and finding the supports that allow them to do so. The only "facilitation" necessary involved stimulating the process of the individual and their circle of significant others crystallizing a vision of inclusion and beginning discussions

We must move beyond the idea that physical integration guarantees social inclusion, and enable individuals to build and maintain the kind of social lives they desire.

of how they could make this happen. Effectively supporting the social inclusion of other persons with developmental disabilities, however, may require considerably greater effort. A variety of approaches will need to be used before a successful one is found. Resources will need to be identified or developed, and efforts made to ensure that the progress that is made is maintained. In addition, professionals within disability-related fields will need to learn to better appreciate the importance of these relationships, understand the cultural/ethnic groups to which individuals belong, and allow the visions of the persons whom they serve to direct efforts in this area. It is all too often the case that persons with developmental disabilities who have developed friendships with fellow residents, coworkers, and members of the community are separated from these individuals as a result of changes in employment or residence with little forethought and a lack support for finding ways to maintain these relationships. A good number of professionals within the human services field will also need to re-examine their reluctance to assist the persons whom they serve to develop social relationships with other individuals with disabilities. More often than most of us would care to admit, we are much more willing to focus our efforts on facilitating the development of inclusive relationships with persons without disabilities despite the fact that this may not be a priority of the persons that we serve. This attitude devalues both persons with disabilities and the social relationships they might establish.

Enhancing the social inclusion of persons with developmental disabilities is not just the responsibility of service providers, family members, and individuals with disabilities. Efforts to promote inclusion will be most successful when persons from local communities, organizations, and society at large become better educated about disabilities and cease to believe in the many myths that circulate about such individuals. It is also likely to be facilitated when children, youth, and adults within our communities broaden their definitions of reciprocity and learn to identify and appreciate the unique capacities and gifts that individuals with disabilities are able to contribute to social relationships.

Supporting individuals with developmental disabilities to better access the communities in which they live, and to develop and maintain positive social relationships, is currently an overriding concern of parents, service providers, and most importantly, persons with disabilities themselves. If this goal is to be achieved, we must move beyond the idea that physical integration guarantees social inclusion and both develop and implement strategies that will enable individuals to build and maintain the social lives they desire. This will require assisting individuals to develop visions for their social lives, individualization in the development and implementation of action plans designed to facilitate persons reaching their goals, and a willingness to support the people whom we serve taking some risks. Although the task may appear daunting, we have been told on numerous occasions by persons with developmental disabilities themselves that the potential rewards are well worth the effort.

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[Hope, continued from page 8]

sense of belonging and purpose. We have made the call that people with disabilities want the same things as people without disabilities. This truth holds for those living in these neighborhoods.

In 1997, middle and upper class America is inclined to dismiss people who live in impoverished, inner city communities. We blame those who live there for their predicament as though their situations were self-induced. This makes it possible for us to absolve ourselves – we have no hand in this matter. We are not responsible. We only feel the impact if we are robbed or if gang violence touches our life directly. Then the matter has come into our backyard.

Finger-pointing and blame are not helpful. We do have responsibility. We must find ways to help individuals who feel hopeless to know they matter. We must support people in finding ways to use their gifts and skills. They can contribute; they can make a difference. We must take an active role in supporting individuals and their families to meet their relationship needs without gangs. And we must shape a national agenda that helps people have access, opportunity, and hope.

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